

**Abstract of the Invention**

- Content is frequently replicated across IP-based networks such as the Internet. Replicas are stored in caches throughout the network. However, to date there has
- 5 been no mechanism to allow users not directly associated with the replicas to access replicas. Therefore although a copy of a content item may be stored geographically nearby, it may still be necessary to obtain the original content item from a server many thousands of miles away.
- 10 By recording the location of content items and producing a mapping of a content item to all known replicas, it is possible to produce an authoritative proxy associated with a particular domain which is able to provide a list of URLs of alternative replica copies of a requested content item. In this way, a content request proxy associated with a requester of a content item may choose the best location for retrieving the content item
- 15 from a list which may include local caches not directly associated with the requester.